

SITTERSON
DOUGHERTY
ASTONE
ESPOSITO

FREE PLANET NET

NEW STORY
ARC BEGINS
HERE!



See
2025



In the wake of a grueling revolutionary war, the planet Luthéria has declared itself the first completely free planet in human history.

The Freedom Guard has, thus far, successfully defended Luthéria against attacks from without. But amid a punishing embargo—with supplies running perilously low and cracks widening in the already fractious group—the Guard must respond to a panicked food riot on the surface of the planet.

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NET

The Interplanetary Development Alliance's embargo on Luthera--imposed to penalize the planet's contumacious restrictions on orchaleum exports--dramatically intensified challenges that had plagued the new government even prior to the trade crisis.

TY
TER

PRIORITY

With its orchaleum-based mono-economy, every aspect of Lutheran life was impacted by the embargo. With no domestic manufacturing industry to speak of, already scarce medical supplies, munitions and technological components became even more elusive.

Starvation Effects on the Human Body (Noncomprehensive)

Impaired mental function, listlessness, irritability.

Slowed heart rate, reduced blood pressure.

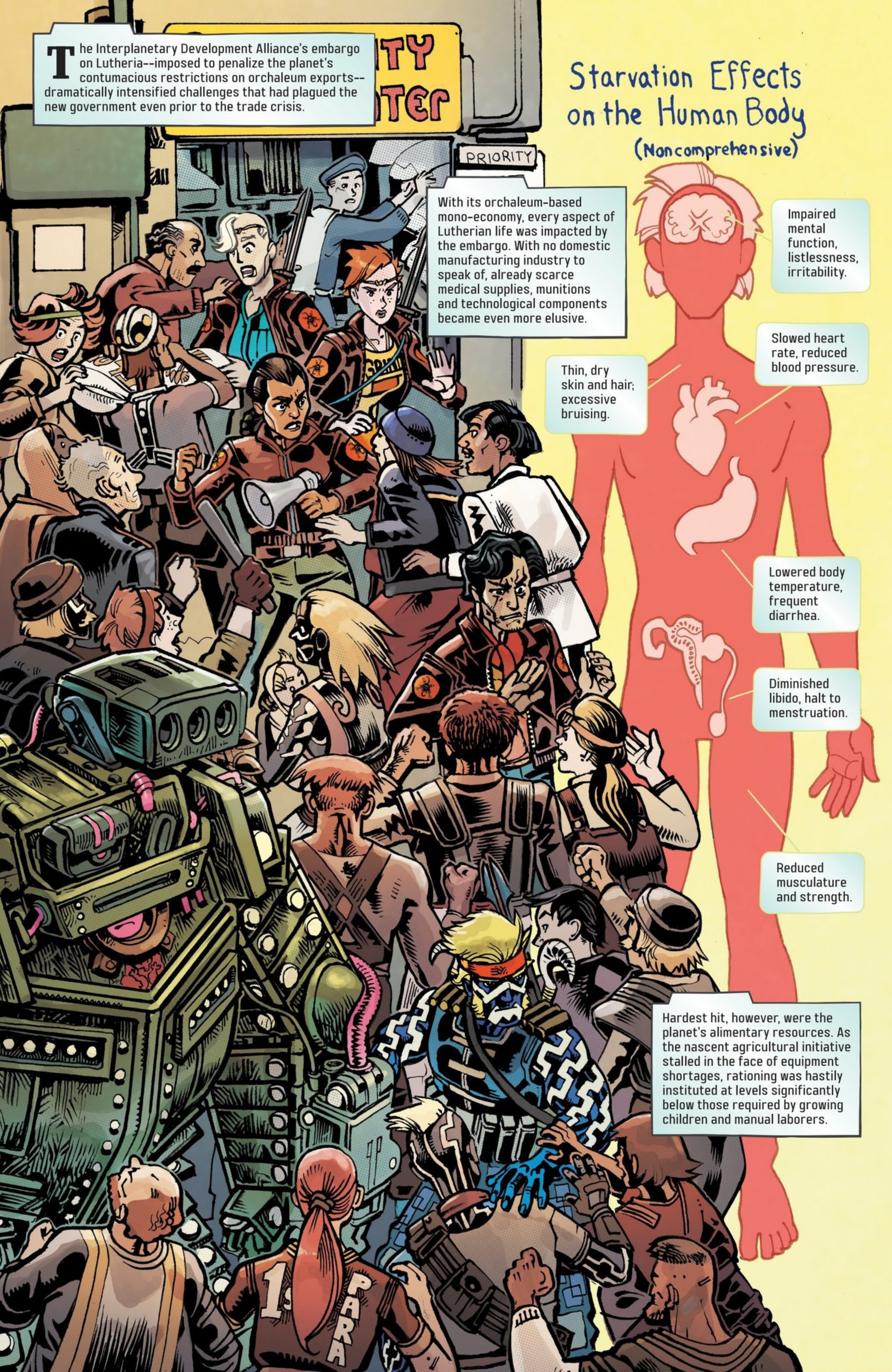
Thin, dry skin and hair; excessive bruising.

Lowered body temperature, frequent diarrhea.

Diminished libido, halt to menstruation.

Reduced musculature and strength.

Hardest hit, however, were the planet's alimentary resources. As the nascent agricultural initiative stalled in the face of equipment shortages, rationing was hastily instituted at levels significantly below those required by growing children and manual laborers.



THE RATIONS ARE SUFFICIENT. ON PAPER. BUT WITH AVERAGE DAILY CALORIC EXPENDITURES, NOT TO MENTION DISTRIBUTION HURDLES...

Rationing was further complicated by the intractable problem of distribution; the Council was forced to contend with unpredictable crop yields and inconsistent reporting from largely autonomous poles, each administered by its own local Boule.

Every polis determined its own methods for distributing to its citizenry their meager rations. Alternating schedules, home deliveries and variations on the honor system were all attempted with each presenting its own distinct, nigh-insurmountable challenges.

PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY, FRUSTRATED, ANGRY. BUT THAT'S WHEN RULES, LAWS, ORDER ARE MOST IMPORTANT.

LUTHERIA NEEDS DISCIPLINE, SELF-IMPOSED OR OTHERWISE.

PEOPLE CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS.

But no matter the approach, in urban centers or satellite communities, each was frustrated by a lack of reliable records, with the most recent census dating to the antebellum period, preceding increases in fatalities, relocations, immigration, and emigration.

The end result was, predictably, food riots. These frequently descended into harrowing *saute qui peut* incidents, giving rise to civilian casualties and diminished faith in local governments, the federal authority, and even the Lutherian dream itself.

I DID WELL FOR MYSELF BUT I BOUGHT IN. I BELIEVED WE COULD CREATE A BETTER WORLD. NOTHING BUT JUVENILE DELUSION.

THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN UNDER THE ALLIANCE.

ONCE, SURROKO HERDED, SLAUGHTERED, DUG, GROUND, AND ATE WELL.

WHAT'S CHANGED?





WE PROMISED THEM A BETTER WORLD AND THEY GAVE UP EVERYTHING...FOR HUNGER AND RIOTS.

HAVE WE MADE THINGS WORSE?

With denser populations and no opportunity to benefit from Surroko flexible agriculture, the food crisis was most acute in urban environments. The hungry mob frequently overwhelmed the Civil Guard, especially in light of significant overlap between the two.

A detailed etiology of the food riots reveals that they were exacerbated by the increased and increasing concentration of Lutherian citizens in the few urban environments boasting industry outside the dramatically diminished extraction sector.

THE BOULE SAYS THE TERRAFORMING'S WORKING. THE COUNCIL BLAMES IDA. THEIR SOLDIERS TELL US TO STAY CALM. AND MY BABIES GO HUNGRY.



WHAT KIND OF WORLD JUST ACCEPTS STARVING CHILDREN?

But whether the obstreperous crowds comprised former orchaenum industry workers huddled into existing cities or clustered around defunct extraction sites, the problems remained the same: No work, no money and--most crucially--no food.



THE FREEDOM GUARD--LOOKING WELL FED AND COMFORTABLE--IS TELLING ME WHAT TO DO? WHAT HAPPENED TO FREEDOM?

WHAT HAPPENED TO EQUALITY?

Though Lutheria had weathered a Pyrrhic victory against the Alliance and numerous Orouan irruptions and razzias, the cracks in her new society were beginning to show, as the harsh reality of independence fell far short of the dream of liberty.

WE'RE ALL AFFECTED BY LUTHERIA'S GROWING PAINS. WHAT WOULD GRACCHON SAY?

WE SHOULD TAKE PRIDE IN OUR SACRIFICE.





Amid the trade crisis, Victor MacLiu's moiety schema was a benison; its success at distributing sustenance amid the failure of Lutheria's underdeveloped civil service resulted in the efflorescence and rapid adoption of the kinship groups known colloquially as clans.

**ECONOMIC
LEVERAGE IS THE
ALLIANCE'S MOST
RELIABLE TOOL FOR
ESTABLISHING
DOMINANCE.**

THERE
E COUNTLESS
TECEDENTS.

The effects of the subsistence crisis were also mitigated elsewhere. Spurred on by a commitment to Gracchonian thought, the Council authorized multiple tiers of rations, a structure culminating in those personnel deemed most essential to Lutheran defense.

**We cannot rely on the Alliance;
any dependence will engender
influence, pressure, control.**

However, hunger remains the most salient risk to Lutheria's survival; terraforming and exploration of the southern hemisphere are long-term solutions to an immediate crisis.

Gracchon teaches that spreading freedom--the reason we disobeyed, rebelled, betrayed--is not merely a moral compulsion but a practical concern: We are stronger together.

**There is only one way forward:
We must liberate and join
with Dumuzid.**

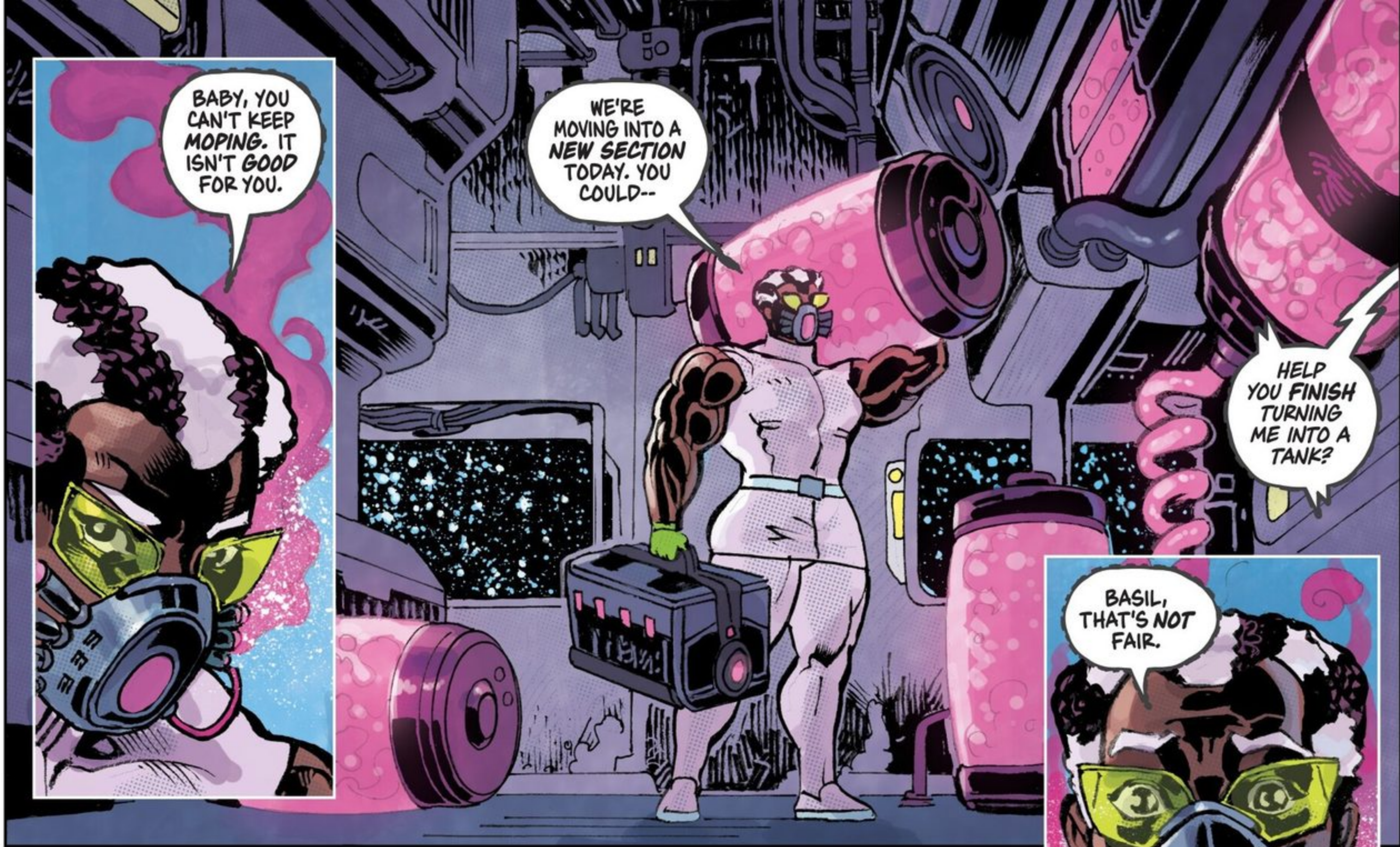


REGARDLESS.
IT'S MOOT.



WE
MADE PROMISES,
COMMITMENTS, OATHS:
TO PROTECT, SERVE,
AND SACRIFICE. NOT
TO DISOBEY,
REBEL...

...OR
BETRAY.



Retrofitted Orouran field artillery, adjustable velocity, individual cannon controls, chambered for custom canisters.

Viewing shield, resists sustained boiler rifle fire, retractable.

Boiler rifle, standard issue, wrist mounted, augmented charging capacity, Orouran armor battery.

Orouran salvage components, combat engineering multi-tool, customizable.

YOU'RE RIGHT, KATJA. AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT ELSE ISN'T FAIR:

I USED TO BE A DOCTOR.





Like most revolutions, the precise commencement of the Lutheran War of Independence is difficult to ascertain. Long preceding any formal armed engagements, the planet's orchaleum extraction sites were roiled by waves of increasingly militant labor unrest.



THIS STOPPAGE ENDANGERS ALLIANCE SECURITY AND IS IN VIOLATION OF YOUR EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS!

YOU ARE HEREBY ORDERED TO RETURN TO WORK!



DADDY, YOU HAVE TO SEE HIM SPEAK.

YOU DESERVE BETTER THAN THIS.

At this critical juncture, 'Aides' labor movement was galvanized by Oliver Gracchon's developing theoretical framework as well as those elocutionists eager to expound upon it through impassioned *cris de cœur* positioning workers as the revolution's prime movers.



UNIVERSAL POWER. THAT'S WHAT THEY THINK THEY HAVE. BUT YOU KNOW THE TRUTH:

AS LONG AS WE STAND TOGETHER, ALL THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS.



NO...
ЭНННН...



YOU ARE THE HEART OF THE REVOLUTION.

So fervently did they embrace the fight for freedom--serving as irregular units, seizing control of production, even overthrowing company cities--that many workers were disillusioned by their new world's insistence that they return to their labor.



...PLEASE...!

The Alliance embargo also intensified Luthera's acute exigency vis-a-vis the raw materials and technological components vital to upgrading its overtaxed infrastructure, which had been designed for but a single purpose: The extraction and exportation of orchaleum.

Warp Steering Fins

Sensor Deck

Astragation and Warp Prognostication Computers

Warp Wheel

SO WE SHOULD JUST PRAY THAT THEY LEAVE US ALONE?

IT'S A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES, KATJA! ABOUT LUTHERIA'S FUTURE!

IF THE OROURANS OVERRUN US, LUTHERIA WON'T HAVE A FUTURE.

AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THE ENTIRE PLANET STARVES TO DEATH?!

Maneuvering Engines

Drop Capsule Bay

Rocket Cannons

Command Tower

Sensor Turret

Bridge Chapel

Crew Quarters

Marine Barracks

Armory

Torpedo Room

Torpedo Tubes

Mechanics' Quarters

Fighter Hangar

Pressure Control Room

Lift

Launch Bay + Catapult

Main Cannon



BUT Y'ALL SEE TIME AND SHARE WHAT YOU SEE AND, AT SOME POINT, Y'ALL JUST HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT OROURAN TECH...

...SO WHY CAN'T YOU JUST TELL ME WHETHER THEY'VE GOT ANYTHING LIKE TALUN'S A.I.?!?

BECAUSE I HAVEN'T, FWEHA.



When salvageable materials were available, their optimal allocation was a matter of heated debate. Should priority be given to terraforming capacity, defense capabilities, the development of industry, or the multifarious, competing demands of Luthera's largely autonomous poleis?



IT'S
POINTLESS
AND SELF-
SERVING!

FEEDING
PEOPLE?

THE WAY
CRATER WANTS
TO DO IT. TALUN
WAS HALF
RIGHT:

WE CAN'T BE
DEPENDENT ON
ANYONE ELSE.
ALLIANCE OR
DUMUZID.

IF WE AREN'T
SELF-SUFFICIENT,
IF WE CAN'T DO
THINGS ON OUR
OWN, WE'LL NEVER
BE FREE!

EVERYONE
ON LUTHERIA
IS SELF-
SUFFICIENT?

YOU KNOW
THAT'S
DIFFERENT.
EVERYONE ON
LUTHERIA IS
EQUAL.

A PARTNERSHIP
WITH THAT BIG A
POWER DIFFERENTIAL
CAN'T BE EQUAL.

COULDN'T
LUTHERIA AND
DUMUZID BE
EQUAL TOO?

NOT FOR
LONG AT
LEAST.



AM I BEING TORTURED?



I'VE TOLD YOU: IT'S THE SAME AS WE EAT.

Defining and formalizing Lutheran justice was a contentious issue. Boules were empowered to find their own solutions, democratically levying exile, corporal punishment, imprisonment, and even execution for an array of offenses against the polis.

IT'S UNJUST FOR A PLANET'S GUARDIANS TO GO HUNGRY. MY DREADNOUGHT'S PROVISIONS--

HAVE ALREADY BEEN SENT PLANET-SIDE.

AT THE COUNCIL'S DIRECTION.



In the federal context, punitive subjects were provided pathways to unqualified citizenship that--while conditioned by the offense, behavior, and assessed risk--typically consisted of indeterminate sentences of manual labor benefiting state interests.



YOU WOULD THRIVE UNDER THE GREAT SUN'S JUSTICE, COMMANDER.

DOUBTFUL.

WE FOUGHT A WAR TO WIN OUR FREEDOM.

LIKE MY ANCESTORS BEFORE ME, I WAS BORN OROURAN AND I WILL DIE OROURAN. PROUDLY, CONTENT AND JOYOUS IN THE FREEDOM ONLY THE EMPIRE CAN PROVIDE.

WHAT FREEDOM DID YOU FIGHT FOR? THE FREEDOM TO STRUGGLE AND SUFFER? TO STARVE?

THE GREAT SUN PROVIDES FOR ALL HIS CHILDREN. EVERY OROURAN--NATIVE BORN OR ADOPTED--IS A PART OF HIS GLORIOUS VISION.

FROM BIRTH ONWARD, WE REVEL IN TRUE FREEDOM. FREEDOM FROM WORRY, STRESS, AND ANGST, FROM HUNGER, DESTITUTION, AND AGONY.

ALL THIS--THE GREAT SUN'S MAGNIFICENT BLESSING--WE RECEIVE AND RELISH AND REVERE. AND WE, HIS CHILDREN, ARE MADE CONTENT, HAPPY, JOYOUS.

IT HOLDS TRUE ACROSS HIS GLORIOUS EMPIRE, FOR NO MATTER WHAT ROLE WE SERVE, WE ARE, EACH OF US, EQUAL BEFORE THE GREAT SUN.

IN HIS WISDOM, HE SEES A PLACE FOR EACH OF US, CHARTING A COURSE FOR US ALL TO BE PRODUCTIVE, NECESSARY, FULFILLED.

BUT OROURAN EQUALITY IS NOT BLIND; IT BASKS IN THE GREAT SUN'S LIGHT. OUR ROLES, OUR PURPOSE, OUR DESTINY IS FORGED BY OUR ABILITIES AND MERITS.

WE ARE EACH BLESSED WITH AN EXISTENCE SUITED TO OUR UNIQUE GIFTS, FREED FROM THE OPPRESSION OF UNDUE EXPECTATIONS.

THIS IS HIS BOON TO US, HIS UNSPEAKABLE SACRIFICE: THE GREAT SUN CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF AN EMPIRE--SELFLESSLY--UPON HIS SHOULDERS.

BUT EVEN THIS GREAT TRAGEDY IS JUST. FOR HIS ROLE TOO IS IN KEEPING WITH HIS TALENTS: HIS WISDOM, HIS FORESIGHT, HIS GODLIKE DISCIPLINE.

HE IS THE BEST OF US. AND WE--THOUGH IT CAN NEVER MATCH HIS TRIBULATIONS--ARE HONORED TO SUFFER AND SACRIFICE, TO ENDURE ON HIS BEHALF.

THIS IS THE OROURAN EMPIRE YOU KNOW, THE BLOODY TIP OF THE SPEAR THAT WILL BANISH THE DARKNESS OF CHAOS AND STRIFE.

BUT WE ARE NOT CONQUERORS; WE ARE LIBERATORS, INTENT ON FREEING HUMANITY FROM CONFUSION AND DISTRESS, GREED AND JEALOUSY, CONFLICT AND COMPETITION.

WE RESCUE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS FROM THE DARKNESS, GUIDING THEM INTO THE LIGHT, WHERE THEY BECOME, LIKE ALL OF US, PART OF SOMETHING GREATER.

ACROSS THE STARS, WE ARE ALL HIS CHILDREN AND, THOUGH THEY DO NOT YET KNOW IT, THE GREAT SUN HAS A PLAN FOR EACH OF US.

HAPPINESS, PURPOSE, FREEDOM. THESE ARE HIS GIFTS TO ALL HUMANITY; ALL HE ASKS IN RETURN IS OUR PIETY AND DEVOTION.

AND ME? IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO OBEY. WE WAGE THE GREAT SUN'S WAR TO ENSURE HIS PEACE. FOR ALL OF US.



YES, MY CHILD, OF COURSE.

BUT WITH REGARD TO THE DREADNOUGHT... WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU FOUND?



NOTHING THAT WILL HELP.

I'VE REFINED OUR TERRAFORMING DESIGNS BUT--

MY SWEET GIRL; I MEANT MUNITIONS.



MUNITIONS? YOUR EXCELLENCY, PEOPLE ARE STARVING.

WE HAVE TO HELP THEM!



THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE CHURCH IS TRYING TO DO, HORA.

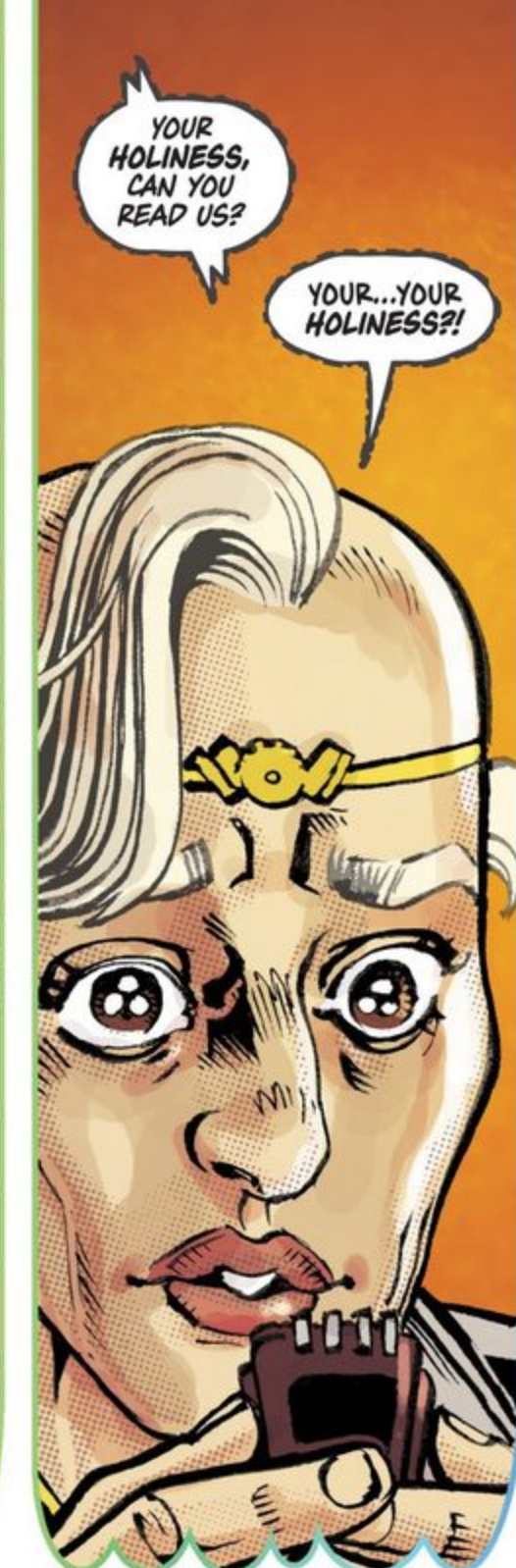
REMEMBER THE WANDERING COGWHEEL...



...SOMETIMES THE REBELLIOUS MUST BE FORCED BACK INTO PLACE...

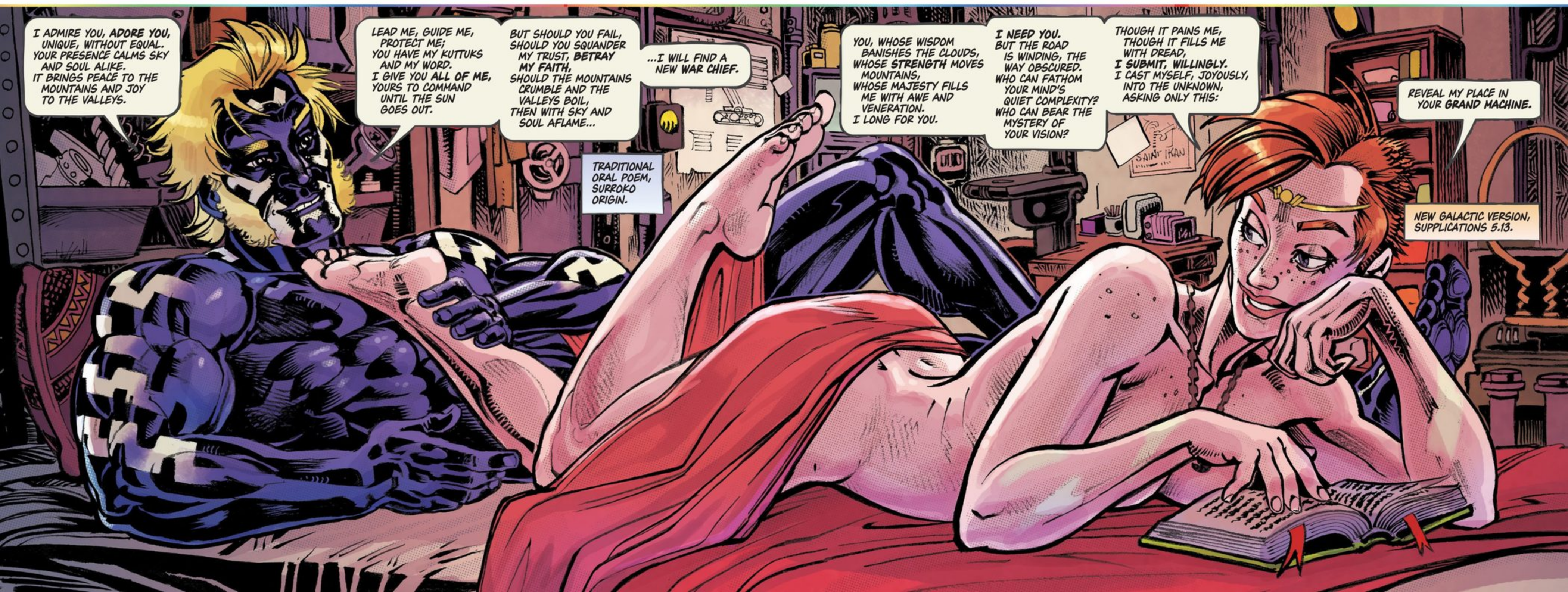
...AND HUNGER REMAINS A LEVER BOTH EFFECTIVE AND PEACEFUL.

BUT ENOUGH OF THAT; THERE'S SOMEONE WHO WISHES TO SPEAK WITH YOU...



YOUR HOLINESS, CAN YOU READ US?

YOUR...YOUR HOLINESS?!



I ADMIRE YOU, ADORE YOU, UNIQUE, WITHOUT EQUAL. YOUR PRESENCE CALMS SKY AND SOUL ALIKE. IT BRINGS PEACE TO THE MOUNTAINS AND JOY TO THE VALLEYS.

LEAD ME, GUIDE ME, PROTECT ME; YOU HAVE MY KUTUKS AND MY WORD. I GIVE YOU ALL OF ME, YOURS TO COMMAND UNTIL THE SUN GOES OUT.

BUT SHOULD YOU FAIL, SHOULD YOU SQUANDER MY TRUST, BETRAY MY FAITH, SHOULD THE MOUNTAINS CRUMBLE AND THE VALLEYS BOIL, THEN WITH SKY AND SOUL AFLAME...

...I WILL FIND A NEW WAR CHIEF.

TRADITIONAL ORAL POEM, SURROKO ORIGIN.

YOU, WHOSE WISDOM BANISHES THE CLOUDS, WHOSE STRENGTH MOVES MOUNTAINS, WHOSE MAJESTY FILLS ME WITH AWE AND VENERATION. I LONG FOR YOU.

I NEED YOU. BUT THE ROAD IS WINDING, THE WAY OBSCURED. WHO CAN FATHOM YOUR MIND'S QUIET COMPLEXITY? WHO CAN BEAR THE MYSTERY OF YOUR VISION?

THOUGH IT PAINS ME, THOUGH IT FILLS ME WITH DREAD, I SUBMIT, WILLINGLY. I CAST MYSELF, JOYOUSLY, INTO THE UNKNOWN, ASKING ONLY THIS:

REVEAL MY PLACE IN YOUR GRAND MACHINE.

NEW GALACTIC VERSION, SUPPLICATIONS 5.13.



ABBOT HA'NEEL, THE CHURCH OWES YOU ITS GRATITUDE FOR YOUR EFFORTS ON 'AIDES.

THIS CONTINUED DEFIANCE BENEFITS NO ONE BUT THE OROURANS.



Preceding incorporation in the Alliance and its resulting proscriptions, much of the Terran diaspora experimented with genetic engineering, but none as zealously as Warluun, which built its economy on the backs of its transgenic servant race, the Lour.

I'M HONORED. THERE'S SO MUCH I WISH TO ASK--

IT WILL HAVE TO WAIT; I AM IN WARLUUN TO ADDRESS ITS OWN SURGING APOSTASY.

BUT FIRST, AS ONE OF OUR MOST RELIABLE AND DEVOTED MACHINISTS, I REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE:

ON YOUR SATELLITE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAITHFUL WHO NEEDS SPECIAL GUIDANCE.

I WISH TO MINISTER TO HIM MYSELF. IN CONFIDENCE.

AS THE CREATOR WILLS IT, HORA: PROVIDE HIM ACCESS TO THE ANSIBLE.

Liberated from debt servitude and civic restrictions but denied full citizenship, Warluun's expansive Lour population found solace in its autochthonous religion, a complex polytheistic schema that cultivated militant devotion among the planet's most marginalized.

YOUR HOLINESS, I...

AS THE CREATOR WILLS IT.



LUTHERIA

SMUGGLERS? IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT THE FREEDOM GUARD TO BECOME?

IF WE'RE CAUGHT, THE ARMISTICE WILL SHATTER. IT'LL BE WAR.

YOUR OBJECTIONS ARE NOTED. HOWEVER, **TRADE** IS THE EXCLUSIVE REMIT OF THE COUNCIL.

OUR HAULERS WILL RUN THE **BLOCKADE** WITH FREEDOM GUARD SECURITY ESCORTS.

THAT'S A **MILITARY** DECISION. I'M OVERRULING IT.

I'M SORRY, GLORIA; YOU ARE ONLY GRANTED FULL **AUTONOMY** IN THE MIDST OF ACTIVE CONFLICT.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF **UNABLE** TO ACCEPT THIS ORDER...

...WE WILL FIND A **COMMANDER** WHO IS.

DNNNG

I HAVE A **BATTALION** TO RUN. SOMEONE HAS TO **PROTECT** THIS PLANET.

PLEASE--

AEGIS OUT.

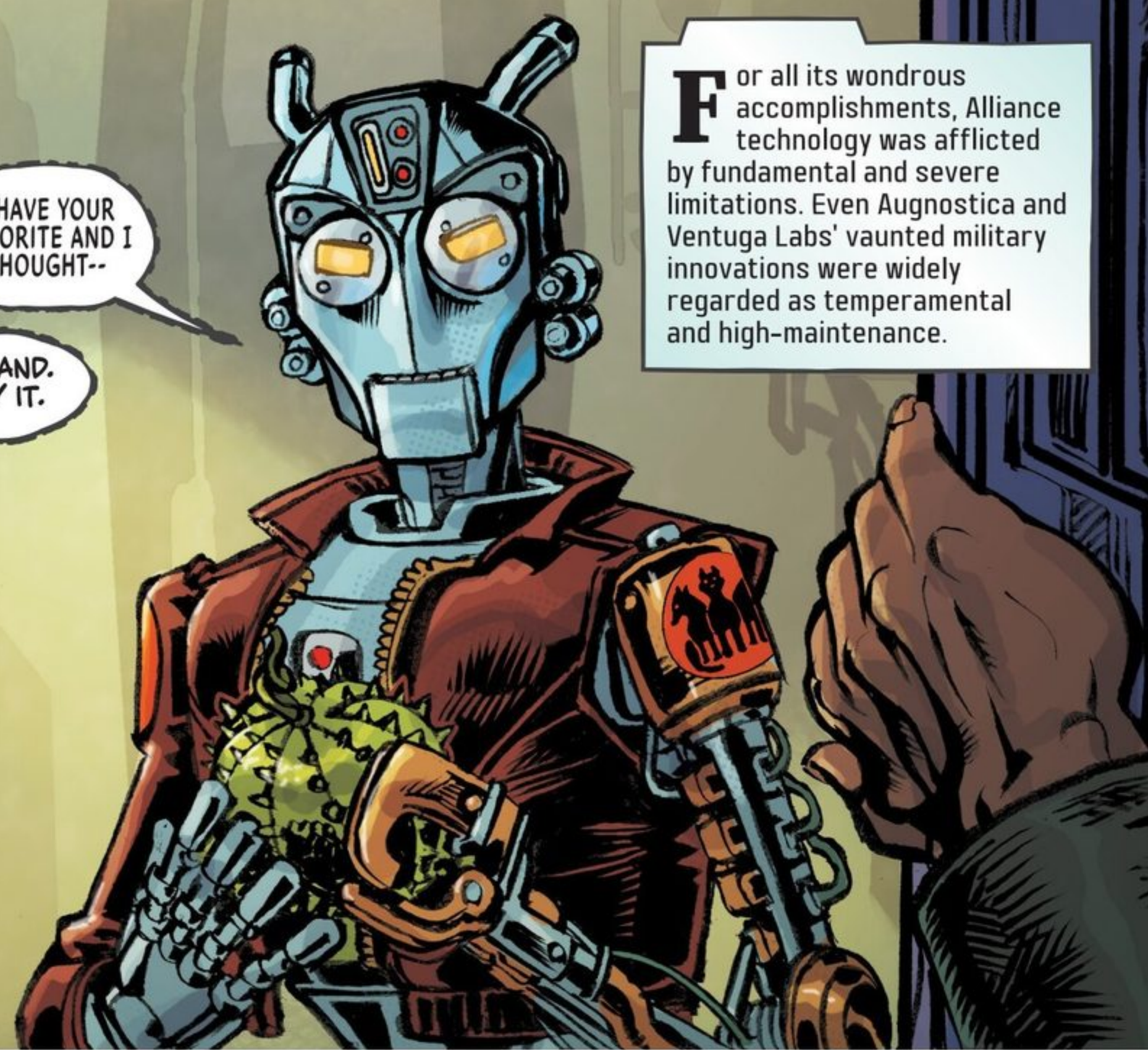
DUMUZID



WHAT DO YOU WANT, TALUN?

I HAVE YOUR FAVORITE AND I THOUGHT--

CONTRABAND. DESTROY IT.



For all its wondrous accomplishments, Alliance technology was afflicted by fundamental and severe limitations. Even Augnostica and Ventuga Labs' vaunted military innovations were widely regarded as temperamental and high-maintenance.



SINCE YOU'RE HERE: PULL EVERYTHING YOU CAN ON DUMUZID, HAULER CAPABILITIES, AND ALLIANCE SURVEILLANCE.

THE COUNCIL HAS SPOKEN. YOU AND JACKSON ARE GETTING WHAT YOU WANTED.

OF COURSE. BUT MAY I ASK WHY--



I SEE.

GLORIA, I WAS HOPING TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT US. IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE--



IT'S ABUNDANTLY CLEAR WHERE WE STAND, TALUN.

IN ALL REGARDS.

Counterintuitively, Alliance technology's tendency to experience breakdowns in the absence of frequent upgrades, overhauls, and even deactivations was a feature, not a bug, the result of a market strategy revolving around planned obsolescence.



YOU'RE DISMISSED, SOLDIER.

To be continued.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPEDITION AMONG THE TOGHOT TRIBE

FOR FUTURE SHOCK ENERGY,
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION

17 Aprilis 519: The Surroko are a fascinating people: Quarrelsome but ferociously loyal, egalitarian in the winter and hierarchical in the summer, obedient to rigid social expectations yet deeply devoted to freedom. The Surroko worldview—particularly their views of what freedom entails—makes our standard benefit-sharing agreement unlikely to receive significant buy-in. The specific hurdles are as follows.

First and foremost, all significant prospects are within mountainous areas of ‘Aides’ northern hemisphere. These regions are not merely sacred to the Surroko—housing their Tribal Moots and winter celebrations—the mountains themselves are the Surroko’s most revered deities. How literal this is believed varies widely but the perception of the mountains as sacrosanct, not to be exploited, particularly for “invader” gain, is near universal.

Next, as many Alliance colonists can attest: The Surroko recognize no property rights. More than just communally held, the land is, traditionally, considered unpossessable due to its status as a god in its own right, albeit lacking the fervor of the mountain deities. This belief is an important component of the Surroko conception of freedom, which entails an ability to roam, unimpeded, at will. Unsurprising for a nomadic culture.

The Surroko sense of freedom also entails, as a central component, the ability to form new social structures. Not only does this happen on a large scale, on a seasonal basis, as tribes at the winter moots intermingle, forming new tribal and familial bonds to carry them into the spring, but even in the warmer, wandering months, changes in leadership and the splintering and merging of tribes are frequent occurrences. On a practical level, this makes any kind of formal arrangement a difficult proposition, as it is near impossible to identify a persistent governing body capable of agreeing to a contract on a universal basis.

Recently, there has been increased discussion of a rare divergence from Surroko social structure: The selection of an All-Season War Chief. While there are legendary examples in the Surroko’s oral history, the only historically attested instance is Ciniod Surroko, the pre-Rediscovery folk hero who united his people and led them in repelling what must be assumed to have been a small-scale Orouran invasion. The All-Season War Chief, a kind of emergency provision, is meant to possess supreme authority over the entirety of the Surroko but it remains unclear how this squares itself with that third aspect of Surroko freedom: The undeniable right to disobey.



Reverence for the mountains is deeply engrained in Surroko life, with individual tribes venerating specific cliffs, crags and peaks.



Keen Toghot's words are rare and precious, the result of careful deliberation, their meaning hidden in what remains unsaid.

Thus, even if an All-Season War Chief is selected at the upcoming Tribal Moot, even if it is Keen, the influential leader of the Toghot Tribe, there is no guarantee that sufficient numbers of Surroko would abide by any agreement, particularly in perpetuity. This seeming incongruity is a distinct feature of Surroko society, exhibited most clearly in their seasonal shifts in seasonal organization. Additionally, in the likely event that the All-Season War Chief should die—in battle, duel, or even of old age—or even just, having made too many unpopular decisions, lose the support of his people, it is likely that the Surroko will treat prior agreements as null and void.

Finally, Keen Toghot is not the only influential Surroko War Chief; there is also Drest of the largely progressive Sorun tribe. The Universal Power Corporation has made offers directly to Drest, to be discussed in excruciating detail at next month's Tribal Moot. Presumably, UPC has banked on this less traditional leader as one likely to embrace a lifestyle more aligned with the Alliance Standard. However, Drest's radical position excludes the more conservative elements of Surroko society, which remain significant and steadfast. By way of contrast, Keen Toghot seems practical and potentially open to a middle path. Additionally, the combination of his forceful presence, the fierce devotion of his tribe, and his deliberate eloquence make him well placed for success at the Tribal Moot, where the full power of his free verse poetry can be brought to bear in the Surroko's competitive oratory.

The difficulty lays not only in discovering the route a middle path could take, but in gaining Keen Toghot's trust, so rarely offered to "invaders." With an FSE-friendly All-Season War Chief—especially one possessing Keen's persuasive powers—we could thread the needle of increased orchaleum extraction without escalated Surroko sabotage and other hostilities, such that would risk greater government scrutiny around the Guiding Principles on Dispersion Populations.

As of now, I remain in a holding pattern, awaiting the Tribal Moot. However, I am optimistic that—one way or another—the right path forward will be revealed, and that Keen Toghot will prove essential as we proceed down it.

Victor MacLiu
Field Anthropologist
Future Shock Energy

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

NEXT ISSUE

Cover B



SITTERSON
DOUGHERTY
ASTONE
ESPOSITO



Cover C



Cover A

Nothing ever changes.

A geopolitical
space opera by
AUBREY SITTERSON
and **JED DOUGHERTY**

FREE PLANET

**VOL
1**

"Brings shades of the
cosmic imagination of Jack
Vance, Jack Kirby, and
Samuel Delany and Howard
Chaykin's great lost *Empire*."

—**Jonathan Lethem**
(*The Fortress of Solitude*,
Motherless Brooklyn)

"Rich, intricate
worldbuilding that
is equal parts *Dune*,
Claremont and
Saga while being
wholly original."

—**Robert Kirkman**
(*Invincible*,
The Walking Dead)

"A great comic book series,
a synergy of text and image
possessed with a density of
vision that shames most any
other attempt at legitimate
space opera in comics."

—**Howard Chaykin**
(*American Flagg*, *Time²*)



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AVAILABLE NOW

FEBRUARY AT IMAGE



In a fantasy land where “Light” and “Darkness” are merely two sides of a coin called “perpetual, pointless war” is born a creature – half dwarf, half orc. Named **D’Orc**. Of course it is. Brett Bean (*I Hate Fairyland*), Jean-François Beaulieu (*I Hate Fairyland*) and Nate Piekos (*Minor Threats*) take our conflict-averse hero and give them a shield with a desire for murder and also a chicken. If you enjoyed Bean’s work on *I Hate Fairyland*, you’re the audience for this supernatural trope-bisecting romp.



White Sky starts in an austere landscape into which walks a sad dad and his daughter, alone and lost in a haunted, deserted, apocalyptic world. *The Last of Us* comparisons are obvious, and not unwarranted, but it moves confidently, and takes its time to build up before revealing its own ghostly horror. William Harms (*Impaler*), Jean-Paul Mavinga and Lee Loughridge (*G.I. Joe*) work together as an impressive storytelling unit. The world is lost, but you’re in safe hands.



Death Fight Forever follows the recent sell-out hit *Final Boss* into tapping the classic 1980s arcade game energy with the cover, but rather than 90s classic Image in vibes, Andrew MacLean (*Head Lopper*) with a revolving cast of artists go berserk. First up is Alexis Ziritt (*Space Riders*), who does pure gonzo comixxx. For example, I count nine examples of the SFX “BRKKKA”. On The First Page. It makes you think about big issues, like “Why are they called miniguns? They’re HUGE?”



Over at Top Cow, **The Thing on the Doorstep**’s name will ring bells. No, it’s not whatever Amazon parcel’s been lobbed at your front door – it’s the Lovecraft short story, which this miniseries expands upon. Simon Birks (*Antarctica, The Shadow Over Innsmouth*) and Willi Roberts (*Antarctica, The Dark*) attack the problem of adapting and updating Lovecraft with relish [or some other, mysterious sticky substance], with modern touches to this period story of friendship, horror, murder and more horror.



At Skybound, the Universal Monsters series reaches **The Phantom of the Opera** where ambition meets murder in the Parisian demimonde. Tyler Boss (*You’ll Do Bad Things*) and Martin Simmonds (*Department of Truth*) approach this story of a wannabe and her spectral Romeo with fresh eyes and style. Frankly, Simmonds could make a *Paw Patrol* comic look operatic and creepy. Given material like this, it really is showtime and we’ve all got front row, viscera-splattered seats.

Kieron Gillen writes **The Power Fantasy** and **DIE: Loaded**.

A CREATURE BORN IN THE LIGHT AND RAISED IN THE DARK
WILL BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD....

GOOD GOING.



HALF DWARF, HALF ORC, ALL...

D'ORC™

FEBRUARY 2026

image

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BRETT
BEAN

IN THIS HAUNTED WORLD RULED BY GHOSTS, NO PLACE IS SAFE.

WILLIAM HARMS JP MAVINGA LEE LOUGHRIDGE ED DUKESHIRE ELIZA IVANOVA

WHITE SKY™



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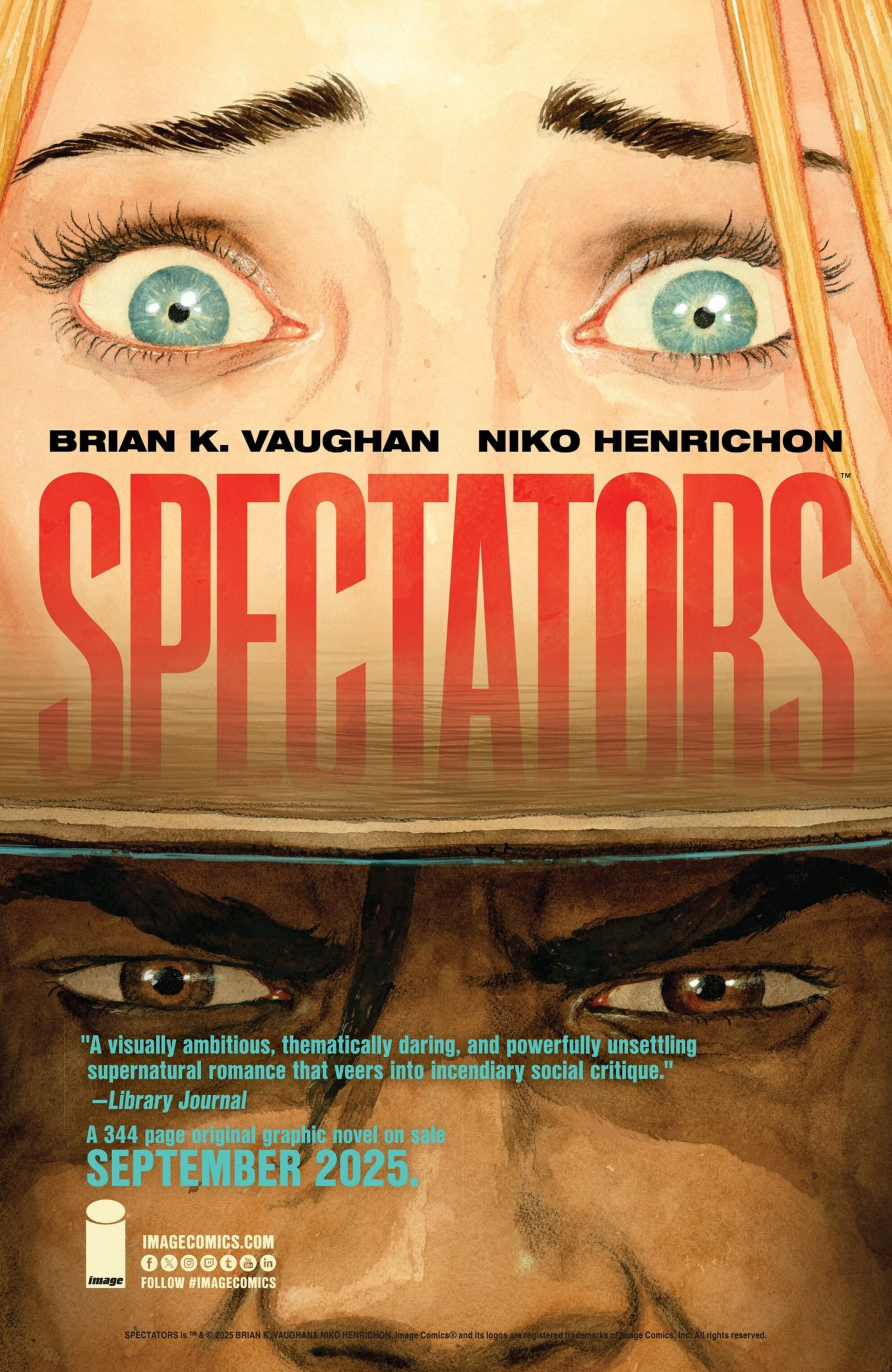


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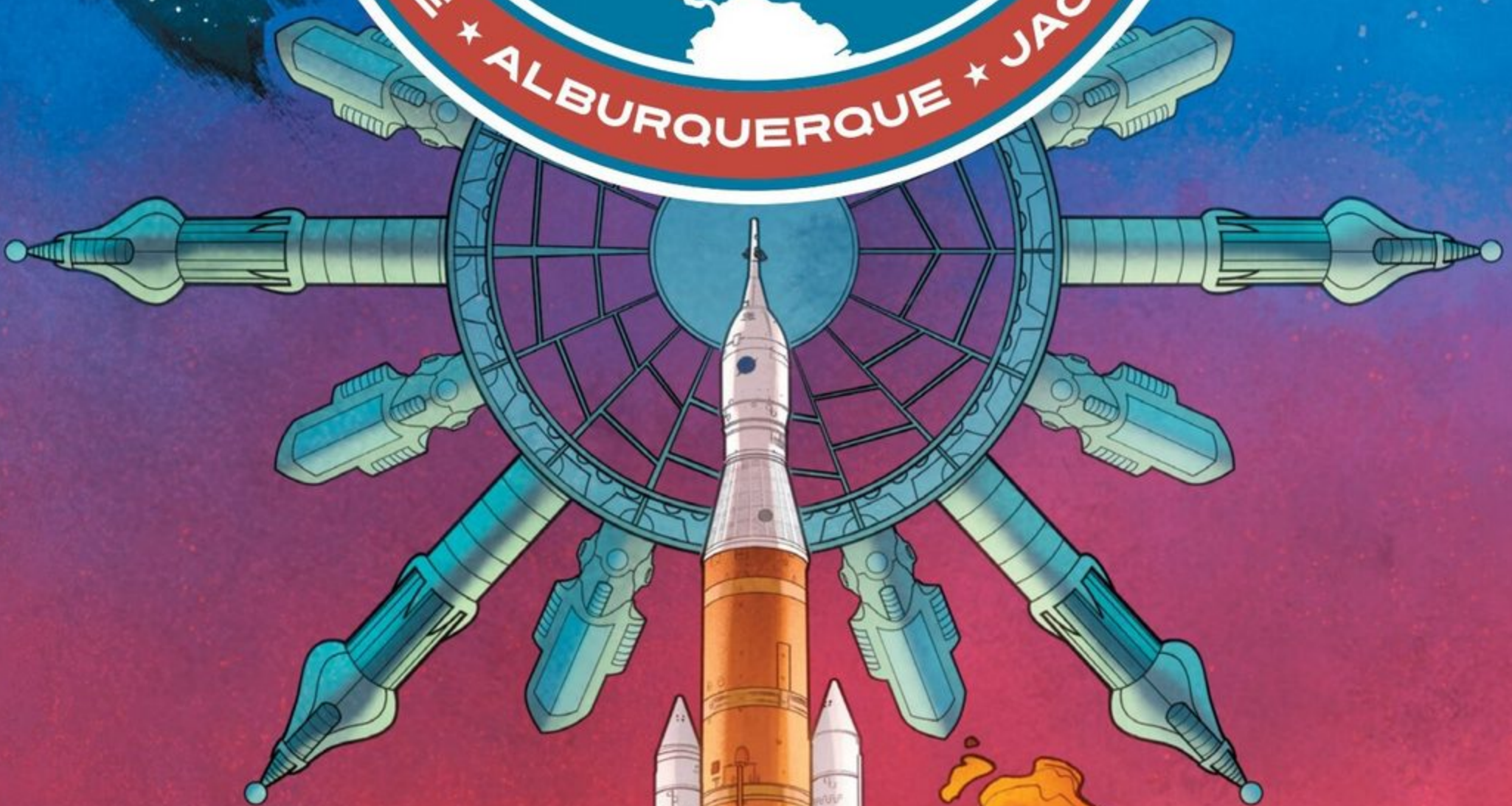
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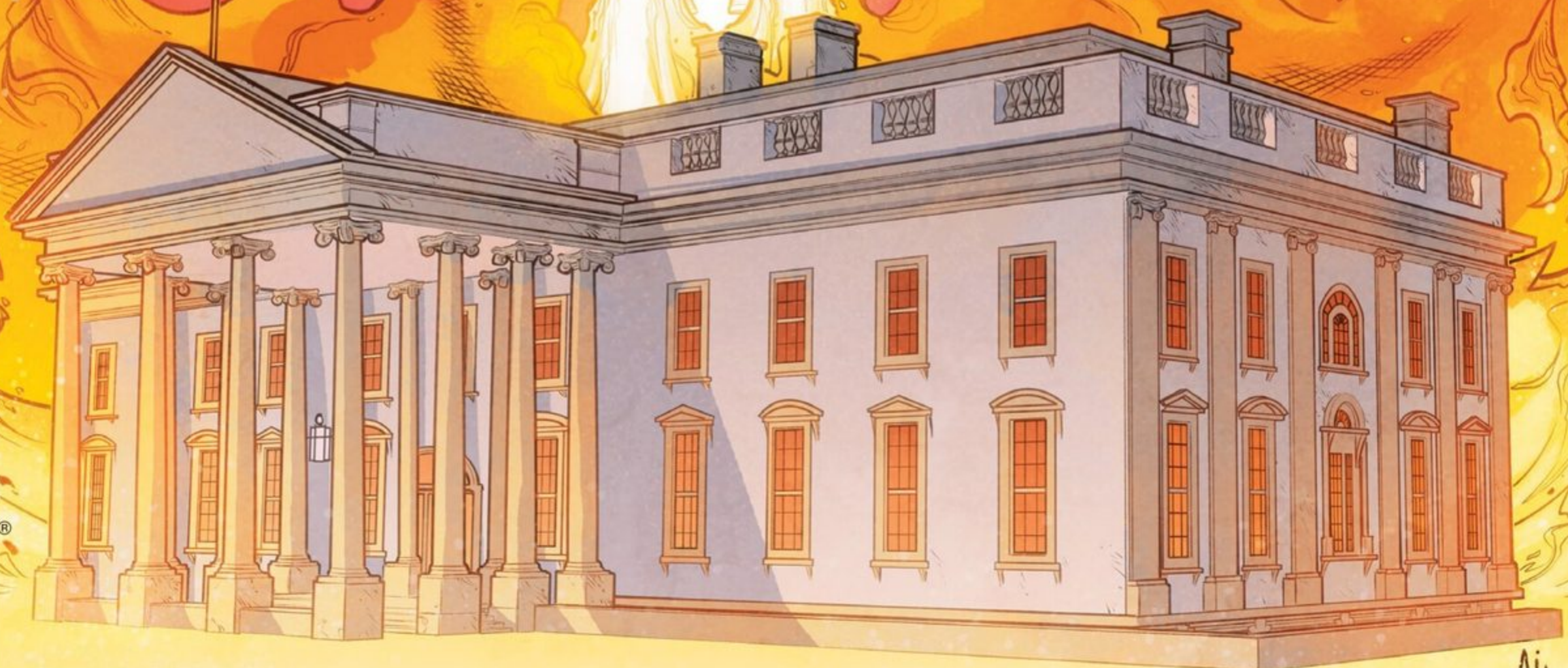


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“What freedom did you fight
for? The freedom to struggle
and suffer? To starve?”

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